

Serial No.: 10/648,803  
Docket No.: 66929-003

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JUL 07 2006

**Amendment to the Claims:**

Cancel claims 20 and 21 without prejudice or disclaimer.

1. (Currently Amended) A stopper for closing bottles at least partially made of synthetic material and having a generally cylindrical shape and selected diameter, and having end portions for insertion into the bottle neck, the stopper being formed with a tubular duct extending between the end portions and being adapted to put the residual volume of air present inside the bottle in communication with the outer ambient;

a separate tube located secured in the tubular duct, and at least a membrane having a diameter and a thickness, and being provided with microholes, said membrane being located in the tube and arranged transversely thereof for allowing the passage of oxygen through the membrane from the bottle interior to the outer ambient and viceversa, and wherein the diameter of the membrane is greater than the thickness thereof and less than the diameter of the stopper.

2. (Previously Presented) The stopper according to claim 1 wherein the size of the diameter of said microholes is such as to avoid the passage of liquids.

3. (Previously Presented) The stopper according to claim 1, wherein said microholes of said membrane have a diameter between about 0.01 and about 0.5 microns.

4. (Previously Presented) The stopper according to claim 1, wherein said membrane is made of a film of acrylic copolymer anchored to a support of non woven fabric.

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5. (Previously Presented) The stopper according to claim 1, wherein the membrane is made with a film of fluorinated polymer.

6. (Previously Presented) The stopper according to claim 1, wherein the membrane is made with a polyamide film.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The stopper according to claim 1, wherein the synthetic material by which said stopper is made belongs to the group of polyethylene resins added with an expansion agent.

9. (Currently Amended) A stopper having a selected diameter for insertion into the neck of a liquid containing bottle having a residual volume of gaseous atmosphere in the interior of the bottle above the liquid comprising:

a body having opposite ends and a generally cylindrical shape, and a tubular through duct extending between the ends;

a separate tube secured-located in the duct; and

a membrane having a thickness and a diameter, the diameter of the membrane being greater than said thickness and less than the diameter of the stopper, said membrane being secured transversely across the tube for allowing communication between the interior and exterior of the bottle, said membrane ~~being secured in the tube and~~ having microholes therethrough for allowing the passage of gaseous atmosphere from the interior of the bottle to the exterior of the bottle, and to selectively block the passage of liquid therethrough.

10. (Canceled)

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11. (Previously Presented) The stopper according to 9, where in the body is formed of a synthetic material comprising at least one of a support of a non woven fabric and; polyethylene resin mixed with an expansion agent; and the membrane comprises a film anchored to the support including at least one of an acrylic co-polymer, a polyamide film; and a fluorinated polymer.

12. (Currently Amended) A stopper for closing bottles comprising:  
a cylindrical body having a selected diameter and a tubular duct therethrough, a tube in the tubular duct and a membrane having a diameter and thickness, and being formed with microholes, said membrane being ~~and~~ arranged transversely to and fixed within said tube, said holes being sized for selectively allowing the passage of oxygen while inhibiting passage of liquid therethrough, and the diameter of the membrane being greater than the thickness thereof and less than the diameter of the body.

13. (Previously presented) The stopper according to claim 12, wherein said microholes have a diameter between about 0.01 and about 0.5 microns.

14. (Previously Presented) The stopper according to claim 12, wherein said membrane is formed of at least one of a film of acrylic copolymer; a film of fluorinated polymer; a polyamide film.

15. (Previously Presented) The stopper according to claim 12, wherein the membrane includes a peripheral support of non-woven fabric.

16. (Canceled)

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17. (Previously Presented) The stopper according to claim 1, wherein the stopper is formed of a polyethylene resin and an expansion agent.

18. (Currently Amended) A stopper for wine bottles comprising:

a cylindrical body having a selected diameter and being formed of a polymeric material having end portions and a cylindrical duct extending from the end portions axially of the body along a central axis thereof;

a separate tube located-secured within the body between the end portions having a central opening aligned and in communication with the duct;

a membrane having a diameter and thickness, and being formed with microholes of a selected dimension, said membrane being located within the tube transversely to said tubular duct for allowing passage of oxygen between the bottle interior and ambient in amounts compatible with the contents of the wine bottle, and wherein the diameter of the membrane is greater than the thickness thereof and less than the diameter of the body.

19. (Currently Amended) A stopper for closing wine bottles, comprising:

a body formed of synthetic material having a generally cylindrical shape and ends, the body being formed with a tubular duct having a diameter and extending between ends of the body along a central axis of the body, ~~said duct;~~

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a tube located in the tubular duct having a cylindrical opening aligned with the axis of the body and a diameter corresponding to the diameter of the duct; the tube having an outer diameter larger than the diameter of the duct; and

a membrane having microholes, said membrane being located in the tube and disposed transversely thereof for allowing the passage of gas between the interior of the bottle interior and ambient.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Cancelled)